

**Amalgamated texts from Weekly Poems in Covid-19 Times,
22nd June - 28th September, 2020**

When it's all over
look back and miss
this strange web of our togetherness –

the arias at windows,
the orchestras of pots and pans,
gratitude for our nurses, doctors
and all our care-workers,
live streaming of ballet dancers,
video links from friends and relatives –

but trade it
for the simple harbour of a hug.

Find yourself a wood
where the sun is a rumour in the trees,
where your playlist is water and wind,
where grass soothes the ice-scarred rock –

when you've given the world
almost up for lost, look out,
follow the path,
dirty and untidy as it is,

for there is a gate inside the wind that opens
— once.
We need to be ready
with all we've gathered.

Our old riches made us slow
to love you, slow to turn to you in praise
but sudden loss and crisis made us know
Our true dependence on your love. Our days
of false security are gone.

Wind
shudders through the trees.
So little changes.
The dying go on dying.

They say not being given
what we pray for
is also an answer:
wait there
patiently,
until the song
that is yours alone to sing
falls into your open cupped hands.
Only then will you know:

'I wasn't paying attention.
For I too do
not live happily
or comfortably
with the whirring
cleverness of our times.
I couldn't tell now what possessed me ...'

Advice keeps coming
back. 'Whatever is matter,
must *enjoy the life*.'

And me, I heard wrongness in putting a *the*
before *life*. ... Ashamed. Aware.
That I knew better. That I'm native
here. In a halfway house. Like that sticking
word
half right, half
wrong, still
present between *enjoy* and *life*.
Days pass when I forget the mystery.
The mystery
that there is anything, anything at all,
let alone cosmos, joy, memory, everything,
rather than void.

And then
once more the quiet mystery
is present to me, the throng's clamour
recedes.

One day so solitary
next day a tangled mess:
that's what pandemics do.

A call to consciousness
growing an inward awareness
a sensitivity
to the other,
to meaningful community,
an outward view.

All that matters is to be at one with the living God,
to be a creature in the house of the God of Life
at peace, in peace
and at one,
sleeping on the hearth of the living world,
yawning at home before the fire of life
feeling the presence of the living God.

Finally, on my way to 'Yes'
I bump into
all the places
where I said no
to my life
and I lift them

one by one
close to my heart
and I say
'holy,
 holy',
dancing in the rumbling dark.

So come a little closer. Give me something to grasp
When I'm weak and I'm breaking.

God speaks to each of us as he makes us.
These are the words we dimly hear:

 'Embody me. Flare up like flame.
 Let everything happen to you: beauty
 and terror.
 Just keep going. No feeling is final.
 Don't let yourself lose me:
 nearby is the country they call life.

Give me your hand.
Give me your beautiful, crumbling heart.'

Credits for all sections of poems used in the amalgamated reflection:

- 22nd June Grace Nichols 'Harbour', see <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/write/harbour.php>
- 29th June Adrian Salmon 'Almost', see <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/write/almost.php>
- 6th July Linda Rose Parkes 'A gate inside the wind', see <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/write/a-gate-inside-the-wind.php>
- 13th July Malcolm Guite '*Exaltabo te, Domine*', see <https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2020/07/07>
- 20th July George Szirtes 'Summer storm', see <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/write/summer-storm-.php>
- 27th July Esther Morgan 'Epiphany', in *Grace* (Bloodaxe Books, 2011), 12.
- 3rd Aug Martha Postlethwaite 'Clearing', see <https://sacompassion.net/poem-clearing-by-martha-postlewaite/>
- 10th Aug Rosie Miles 'Question', in *Cuts* (HappenStance, 2015), 17.
- 17th Aug Zaffar Kunial 'The word', in *Faber New Poets 11* (Faber & Faber, 2014), 1.
- 24th Aug Denise Levertov 'Primary Wonder', in *Sands of the Well* (New Directions Books, 1998), 129.
- 31st Aug Arlene Ashack 'Tangled times', in <https://anawimartsjournal.com/special-edition-art-in-the-time-of-corona-virus-2020/tangled-times/>
- 7th Sept D. H. Lawrence 'Pax', in *The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence*, (Wordsworth Poetry Library, 1994), 587.
- 14th Sept Peshya Joyce Gertler 'The Healing Time', in *The Healing Time: Finally On My Way To Yes* (Pudding House Chapbook Series, 2008), 7.
- 21st Sept Kae Tempest 'People's faces', in *The Book of Traps and Lessons*, track 11, released 14th June, 2019.
- 28th Sept Raine Maria Rilke 'God speaks to each of us', in *Rilke's Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*, trans. Anita Barrows & Joanna Macy, (The Berkley Publishing Group, 1996), 119.